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DE RUEHKH #0747/01 1371109
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 161109Z MAY 08 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0830
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000747

DEPT A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AF/C, AF/E
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DRAFT SPLM CONSTITUTION SETS STAGE FOR CONVENTION DYNAMICS

REF: KHARTOUM 728

¶1. (SBU) The SPLM's 119-member Interim National Council (INC) held its final session May 12-13 in a marathon push to finalize transformative foundational documents for the SPLM on the eve of the party's second national convention. Before its dissolution (the INC will be replaced by a 250-member National Liberation Council) the INC effected critical changes in two documents - the party's manifesto and constitution - in an effort to streamline the party's executive structures. This has sparked fierce debate within the party leadership, and has resulted in Pagan Amum's departure from the SPLM's senior-most ranks (reftel) and may have set the stage for Riek Machar's ouster from the party's senior ranks and perhaps even from the Government of Southern Sudan itself.

¶2. (SBU) The draft SPLM Constitution will streamline the party's executive structure for the first time in 14 years. Changes to the party's top positions, endorsed by the INC but subject to the vote of convention delegates, is as follows: one elected SPLM chairman, one elected vice chairman, one elected secretary general, two appointed deputy secretary generals, an appointed national treasurer, and six assistants to the Secretary General. Current SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir is the presumptive winner of the party chairman race, with the entirety of the Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria regions as well as Jonglei state pledging their votes to him in advance.

¶3. (SBU) According to party insiders, Kiir's stated preference for the single vice chairman slot (reduced from the current three vice chairmen positions per the INC) is Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly Speaker and Equatorian James Wani Igga. One of the three current vice chairmen, Blue Nile Governor Malik Agar, has told us that he does not want to remain in the position and has called for the Northern Sector's 500 delegates to back Igga's candidacy. The move to a single vice chairman is likely to sideline the third current vice chairman, GOSS Vice President Riek Machar, fueling speculation that Machar may stand against Kiir for the party chairmanship. While some Sudanese media on May 15 announced that Nhial Deng Nhial would also stand against Kiir, in a conversation with Acting CG May 9 Nhial claimed he had no interest in remaining politically-engaged in the SPLM, beyond participating in the National Liberation Council, preferring instead to open a private law practice in Juba. Nhial returned to Sudan only recently from self-imposed exile in Scotland.

¶4. (SBU) Ancillary fallout from the consolidation of available vice chairman slots has impacted the decision-making behind who will - or should - become the party's next Secretary General (SG). Current SG Pagan Amun has refused to compete for the position and Unity State Governor Taban Deng Gai appears to be the sole candidate for the position, according to party leadership and other delegates gathered here in Juba. Kiir reportedly asked Upper Nile SPLM member John Luk Jok if he wanted the position, but he apparently declined the offer.

¶5. (SBU) The Convention will also transform the Interim Political

Bureau into a full "Political Bureau," and reduce its size from its present 37 members to 21 - with quotas for five northern representatives and five women. The Political Bureau will remain the party's most instrumental executive body, and these 21 members will shape the SPLM's vision and actions going forward. In addition, the Political Bureau must approve the Chairman's selections for the Northern Sector and Southern Sector Deputy Secretary Generals. The INC will be replaced by a 250-member National Liberation Council (NLC), envisioned as the "grand parliament of the party." The NLC has authority to approve the six programmatic assistants to the Secretary General.

16. (SBU) Current SPLM Deputy SG Abdelaziz el Helou told Acting CG he would prefer to stand down from the position in order to concentrate on the party's organization and leadership in Southern Kordofan (where he is from) although he is prepared to serve in any capacity at "the request of the people." Deputy Secretary General Yasir Arman has similarly evinced a degree of ambivalence about his position within the party leadership, but has told us he remains committed to serving in any role that will benefit the party. By contrast, Southern Sector Deputy Secretary General Anne Itto actively lobbied INC members to keep her position during the INC's fifty-plus hours of meetings before the start of the convention.

17. (SBU) Comment: Although it is unlikely to succeed, a challenge by Machar against Kiir for the position of SPLM Chairman bears close scrutiny. Moreover, there is likely to be fierce competition for the 21 "streamlined" Political Bureau seats. Although we detected a degree of ambivalence among several party heavy-weights such as Agar, Nhial, and Arman, this may in part reflect an effort on their part to downplay expectations - and perhaps a desire to be courted - which is only natural at the start of the convention when the

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outcome remains difficult to predict. The standing in the party following the convention of Arman and other northerners may signal the extent to which the SPLM remains nationally-oriented and loyal to John Garang's "New Sudan" vision, or whether it will take on a more secessionist bent. While most southerners assume the South with secede in 2011, standing before SPLM delegates from the entirety of Sudan at the opening of the convention May 15, Chairman Kiir's keynote speech was true to the national vision of the party, with a heavy emphasis on democratic transformation in all of Sudan and on CPA implementation.

FERNANDEZ